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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SHI'A COR MEMBER DISCUSSES TERRORIST CHALLENGE,  
PRESSURE ON NASCENT POLITICAL SYSTEM

Classified By: Political Counselor Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (C) Sheikh Mohammed al-Haideri, member of the Council of Representatives (CoR) from the UIC and chair of the CoR's human rights committee, told CODEL Baird on August 11 that terrorism, including Al-Qaeda (AQ) and armed groups operating outside the law, was the biggest challenge to Iraq. (Note: CODEL Baird includes Rep. Brian Baird, D-WA; Rep. Christopher Shays, R-CT; and Rep. Ralph Hall, R-TX. End note.)

Underscoring the seriousness of the threat, al-Haideri said that there would be "chaos if U.S. troops were to leave now."

The terrorist threat, interference by neighboring countries, and former regime elements seeking a return to power, al-Haideri continued, put such pressure on Iraq's nascent political system that it was difficult for Iraq's leaders to reach compromise on key laws. "There needs to be a period of adjustment for Iraqi politicians and people to reach political maturity," al-Haideri said, arguing that it was important to take the necessary time to reach agreement on key laws.

¶2. (C) Asked whether Ayatollah al-Sistani believed Iraq was headed in the right direction, al-Haideri, who described himself as "close" to Sistani though not a formal advisor, said that Sistani felt that some things were going in the right direction, citing the constitution and elections as examples. Al-Haideri said "there was a certain lack of clarity" on the fight against terrorism, particularly as to why large areas of Baghdad still remained in terrorist hands.

Al-Haideri contrasted Diyala, where he said some displaced families were already returning to their homes one or two months after a large anti-AQ operation began, with Baghdad, where no one felt safe to return home five or six months after the start of Fard al-Qanoon.

¶3. (C) Turning to human rights, al-Haideri acknowledged that there were human rights violations in GOI-controlled detention centers. He noted that most detainees were Sunnis, detained as a result of anti-terrorism operations. Arguing that the government was generally "balanced" as far as human rights went, al-Haideri noted that the government had been slow to address the situations of those whose human rights had been violated under Saddam Hussein, most of whom were Shi'a. He expressed frustration that a draft law that would establish an independent human rights commission had not progressed faster through the CoR legislative process, attributing the delay to a debate in the government over whether there should be a Ministry of Human Rights (which there currently is), an independent commission, or both.

¶4. (U) CODEL Baird did not have an opportunity to clear this cable before their departure.

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